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**U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE WELCOMES SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF
THE BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL NEGOTIATIONS**

United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky today complimented the successful conclusion of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity, an international agreement on trade in living genetically modified organisms which was completed in Montreal.

Ambassador Barshefsky stated, "I welcome the successful completion of the Biosafety Protocol. Its conclusion will promote safe trade and confidence in this important technology benefitting American farmers, consumers and industry."

Conclusion of the protocol, which began in 1995, represents a major advance in international cooperation in biotechnology and trade. Ambassador Barshefsky emphasized that, "International cooperation among the participants, including the European Union, which made this agreement possible, helps to establish common ground for future negotiations and other joint endeavors regarding biotechnology and the facilitation of world agricultural trade."

This agreement is designed to ensure that trade in products of biotechnology does not cause harm to the environment. Under the new Protocol governments will receive advance notice and the opportunity to approve or disapprove imports of living genetically modified organisms (LMO) intended for release into the environment. This requirement will not apply to agricultural commodities for food, feed or processing. Over the longer term, the Protocol makes provision for the development of export documentation requirements that will help governments identify shipments of LMOs.

The Protocol also establishes a clearing house which governments will use to share information on laws, regulations and regulatory decisions relating to biotechnology. Further, it will promote capacity building for developing countries to help them assess the benefits and risks of LMOs. (The Protocol

emphasizes that trade and environment policies should be mutually supportive and preserves rights under other international agreements, such as the World Trade Organization, to ensure that it's implementation will not be misused for trade protectionist ends.)